

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-06

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P 131734Z JUN 75

FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4181

C O N F I D E N T I A L PANAMA 3499

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PN, PQ, US

SUBJECT: HIGHLIGHTS OF 404TH PRC MEETING, JUNE 12

1. STATUS OF TREATY NEGOTIATIONS. AMBASSADOR OPENED THE MEETING WITH BRIEF REVIEW OF STATUS OF TREATY NEGOTIATIONS. HE REPORTED AMBASSADOR BUNKER HAD TELEPHONED FONMIN TACK TO ADVISE HIM U.S. NEGOTIATORS HOPE TO BE IN PANAMA AROUND LAST WEEK OF JUNE. AMBASSADOR SAID TACK HAD EXPRESSED HOPE THAT NEGOTIATORS WOULD COME AS INDICATED AND THAT HE WOULD REPORT AMBASSADOR BUNKER'S CALL TO GENERAL TORRIJOS. BRIEF DISCUSSION FOLLOWED REGARDING LOCAL RUMORS THAT FONMIN TACK MIGHT BE RELIEVED AS WELL AS REPORTS ABOUT HIS POSSIBLE SUCCESSOR AS FONMIN.

2. BUDGET AND FINANCE COMMITTEE. GOVERNOR REPORTED ON PAN CANAL B AND F COMMITTEE MEETING WHICH HAD NECESSITATED POSTPONEMENT OF PRC MEETING. COMMITTEE APPROVED GOVERNOR'S RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AUSTERITY PROGRAM IN VIEW OF SERIOUS FINANCIAL PROBLEMS FACED BY COMPANY. GOVERNOR EXPRESSED HOPE THAT EMPLOYEE REACTION WOULD NOT BE GREAT AND THAT EMPLOYEES WOULD NOT CONNECT AUSTERITY MEASURES WITH TREATY NEGOTIATIONS. GOVERNOR REPORTED THAT IN SOCIAL FUNCTIONS COMMITTEE MEMBERS COMMENTED THAT RECENT PUBLICITY GIVEN TO TREATY NEGOTIATIONS IN SPEECHES, EDITORIALS AND FEATURE ARTICLES HAD NOT, IN THEIR
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OPINION, CHANGED BASIC PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARDS A NEW

TREATY. GOVERNOR ADDED SOME MEMBERS HAVE VERY CONSERVATIVE VIEWS TOWARDS NEW TREATY.

3. GAO REPORT. GOVERNOR ADVISED PRC THAT HE WILL TESTIFY BEFORE CHAIRMAN METCALFE AND PAN CANAL SUBCOMMITTEE ON GAO REPORT WHICH WAS RELEASED AND PUBLISHED LAST WEEK. WHETHER OR NOT COMPANY IS FOSTERING DISCRIMINATORY PROGRAMS IN SUCH AREAS AS HOUSING, SCHOOLING AND SECURITY POSITIONS, PERCEPTION OF SUCH PRACTICES BY CHAIRMAN METCALFE, LOCAL LABOR UNION AND OTHERS, CERTAINLY EXISTS. GOVERNOR INDICATED HE WOULD TRY TO SAY SOMETHING OF SUBSTANCE IN HIS TESTIMONY WITHOUT GOING TOO FAR IN COMMITTING HIMSELF AND PAN CANAL TO DEFINITIVE CHANGES UNTIL ALL OPTIONS ARE THOROUGHLY CONSIDERED.

4. REQUEST FOR TELEVISION INTERVIEW. GOVERNOR STATED A LOCAL TELEVISION CHANNEL WOULD LIKE TO CONDUCT TAPED INTERVIEW WITH GOVERNOR. QUESTIONS WOULD BE SUBMITTED BEFOREHAND AND GOVERNOR'S RESPONSES DUBBED IN SPANISH. IN REQUESTING ADVICE OF OTHER PRC MEMBERS, GOVERNOR STATED HIS OWN PUBLIC AFFAIRS STAFF RECOMMENDS ACCEPTANCE. CINC RECOMMENDED STRONGLY AGAINST INTERVIEW, STATING IT WOULD SET PRECEDENT FOR OTHER PRINCIPALS AND BECAUSE DELICATE AND UNRESOLVED TREATY ISSUES MIGHT BE BROACHED. AMBASSADOR WAS GENERALLY IN FAVOR OF INTERVIEW. AFTER FURTHER DISCUSSION OF POSSIBLE ADVANTAGES AS WELL AS PITFALLS, IT WAS DECIDED TO GIVE FURTHER THOUGHT TO REQUEST.

5. SQUATTERS. GENERAL ROSSON GAVE STATUS REPORT OF EVACUATION OF SQUATTERS IN MILITARY RESERVATIONS IN THE CANAL ZONE. THE REMOVAL WAS TO HAVE BEEN COMPLETED BY END OF MAY. SEVENTY-FIVE FAMILIES HAVE ALREADY BEEN MOVED AND THE 25 REMAINING FAMILIES WILL BE EVACUATED THIS MONTH. NATIONAL GUARD STILL APPEARS DETERMINED TO TAKE STRONG ACTION, INCLUDING DESTRUCTION OF SHELTERS AND CROPS IF NECESSARY TO COMPLETE EVACUATION.

6. NAVAL FORCES AUGMENTATION. CINC REPORTED HE WISHED TO INFORM PRC OF PROPOSAL TO AUGMENT NAVSO FORCES BY TWO
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NEW PATROL CRAFT. BOATS WOULD BE USED FOR HARBOR PATROL AND DEFENSE AS WELL AS SURVEILLANCE ON PACIFIC SIDE. PATROL BOATS WOULD BE MANNED BY 4 OFFICERS AND 16-20 ENLISTED MEN WHO WOULD BE STATIONED AT RODMAN. THERE IS SOME POSSIBILITY THAT PROPOSED FORCE AUGMENTATION COULD INVOLVE ONE ADDITIONAL PATROL BOAT.
JORDEN

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